

# Power Hour Lessons

## A Deep Dive into the ACS and PTS



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### Overview

1. In this outline, I'll go over how to use the Airman Certifications Standards (ACS), and I'll go over how to use some PTS tools for the Flight Instructor Airplane Single-Engine for preparing for the practical test. The ACS is the new version and format replacing the PTS (Practical Test Standards.)
2. Airman Certification Standards (ACS) is a testing standard for pilot and soon-to-be instructor certificates that was partially implemented due to a legal challenge. FAA now believes it has everything needed to satisfy releasing the remaining ACSs when it thinks appropriate. No one in industry knows yet the release dates.
3. On the airplane side, the following were released:
  - a. Private Pilot ACS
  - b. Instrument Rating ACS
  - c. Commercial Pilot ACS
  - d. ATP ACS
4. You can find the PTSs and ACSs at [faa.gov](http://faa.gov).
5. First, we'll cover what the ACS is and how to use it. It is:
  - a. NOT a syllabus or everything a pilot or instructor needs to know.
  - b. A standard for the knowledge test and handbooks - Knowledge areas in the ACSs.
  - c. A standard for Risk Management in every task.
  - d. A completion standard that the pilot needs to meet as a minimum for certification.
6. The ACS is organized by:
  - a. Area of Operation - A broad section of the standard, such as Takeoffs, Landings, and Go-Arounds.
  - b. Tasks - These are individual maneuvers or ground topics under an Area of Operation and include - Knowledge Areas, Risk Management, and Skills standards. Short-field takeoff is an example.
  - c. All tasks include References - These are the only documents/tools that can be tested on the practical test (checkride.)
  - d. Special emphasis areas from the previous PTSs were moved into the appropriate Risk Management section for the task representing a previous special emphasis item.
7. Organizational Notes:
  - a. Individual items within the Knowledge Area of each task have a unique designator. It is a four-part code that begins with the ACS, for example, CA for Commercial Pilot, next is the Area of Operation, then the task, and finally, the knowledge item. So, for instance, CA.I.C.K1 can be decoded as CA- Commercial Pilot ACS, I-Area of operation I, C-Task C, K1-Knowledge item K1. These codes also apply to the knowledge test questions once the ACS fully aligns with the knowledge tests. The Private Pilot Knowledge Test is the only test fully aligned with the ACS. Others still use Learning Statements (PLT codes.)

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- b. Individual items within the Risk Management Area of each task also have a unique designator. Instead of K, it is the same format as the knowledge item with the designator R for Risk Management.
- c. Skills also have unique designators. In this case, the four-part designator identifying an individual Skill will have the letter S instead of R or K.
8. The DPE is required to select at least one Knowledge area and One Risk Management area from each required task. They must also test the entire Skills area.
9. Flight Instructors must teach ALL Knowledge and Risk Management Areas in every task.
10. The ACS represents the lowest standards a pilot must meet for certification.
11. This means that the pilot must be trained and perform better than ACS standards, so on the practical test, the pilot will have some margin due to nervousness, etc.
12. Not all maneuvers have the same standards or are performed the same. Surprise! For example, Steep Turns for Private, Commercial, and ATP differ. Here's how:
  - a. Private - A 360-degree level turn at 45 degrees of bank in one direction, followed by a turn in the opposite direction "as specified by the evaluator." It doesn't have to be another 360-degree turn!
  - b. Commercial - A 360-degree level turn at 50 degrees of bank and then "Perform the Task in the opposite direction."
  - c. ATP - A 360-degree level turn at 45 degrees of bank by reference solely to the flight instruments "of at least 180 degrees, as specified by the evaluator, and perform the task in the opposite direction as specified by the evaluator."
  - d. For all of the Steep Turns in all ACSs, the skills (completion standards) are  $\pm 100$  feet,  $\pm 5^\circ$  bank, and  $\pm 10^\circ$  heading.

PTS Tools for Flight Instructor learners and trainers. I'll review some tools and explain where completion standards can be found.

13. For those of you pursuing or training learners for the Flight Instructor Airplane Single Engine Certificate, the Flight Instructor PTS will be part of the testing standard because there isn't yet a released ACS. However, there are a few things that you will need to know so that you'll have all of the PTS tools that you need to understand what is tested and to what standard.
14. The difference between the CFI PTS and other testing standards is that the completion standards don't have any metrics, like  $\pm 100$  feet,  $\pm 10^\circ$ , etc. The reason is that they are in the appropriate ACS, such as the Commercial ACS or Private ACS. For example, there are no metrics under Steep Turns in the Flight Instructor PTS, so you need to go to the Commercial ACS to find them. The metrics are located in the Private Pilot ACS for something like Turns around a point. Your PTS tools are then the following:
  - a. Flight Instructor Airplane ACS.
  - b. Private Pilot Airplane ACS.
  - c. Commercial Pilot Airplane ACS.

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15. Your last tool, and maybe the best starting point, is noting which tasks are required and which can be selected as options. If you look at each task in either the PTS or ACS, you will see NOTES, in some cases, below the references. The note may say that the examiner shall select task M and at least one other task. In the case of the ACS, for example, the Commercial ACS, under Performance Maneuvers, there is a link to the appendix. In the Appendix, you find that Task A or B and, Task C or D, and Task E are the minimum required for testing. Task A is Steep Turns, B is Steep Spirals, C is Chandelles, D is Lazy Eights, and E is Eights on Pylons. In the Private Pilot ACS under the Ground Reference Section, you'll find that only one ground reference maneuver is required to be tested-Turns around a point, Rectangular courses, or S-Turns across a road.
16. As you can see, these ACS and PTS tools we've covered allow you to understand the document's structure, what will be tested, and what completion standards are required.



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